

**Written Testimony of
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**Before the
Judiciary Committee
House of Representatives
State of Michigan
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HB 5515

Chairman Meadows, Vice-Chair Lipton and honorable members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 5515 and the important issue of protecting the right of an infant to breastfeed.

My name is Tim Tobolic, MD. I am a family physician from Byron Center, MI where I have practiced for 30 years. I still do deliveries and have supported many babies and mothers with their decision to breastfeed.

I am a past president of the Michigan Academy of Family Physicians. I served on the American Academy of Family Physicians' Commission on Public Health and coauthored the AAFP Position Paper on Breastfeeding. I have also served on the Board of Directors of the Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine and achieved the designation of Fellow of the ABM.

In Michigan and nationally, I have led advocacy efforts in several public health areas including tobacco prevention, safety belt use, healthy nutrition and physical activity. Michigan should be proud of its accomplishments in tobacco control and seat belt use, but we have much work to do to promote breastfeeding to improve the health of our citizens.

To understand the impact of HB5515 or any legislation that supports breastfeeding, I would like to make some important points.

Breastfeeding and human milk are the physiologic norm for infants. For those of you or your colleagues who are unsure about the benefits of breastfeeding, have been told that formula or artificial baby milk is an adequate substitute, and are thinking right now "why don't they just give the baby a bottle", THE DEBATE IS OVER!

The American Academy of Family Physicians, American Academy of Pediatrics, American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, US Surgeon General, American Dietetic Association, CDC, World Health Organization and nearly 50 other organizations

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have declared that breastfeeding is the optimal form of infant nutrition for up to a year of age and beyond. Not breastfeeding is a public health concern in this state.

Human milk is physiologically, nutritionally and immunologically exact and matched for the growth and protection of human infants and will never be reproduced by formula. In fact, just one bottle of formula, early in infancy, can have significant negative impact on infant physiology and the future success of that breastfeeding baby.

Michigan has the unfortunate distinction of being one of the unhealthiest states in the US with high rates of obesity, chronic disease, infant mortality and resulting high medical costs. Breastfeeding has overwhelmingly been shown to lessen the occurrence of upper respiratory and gastrointestinal infectious diseases in infants. Prolonged breastfeeding has been shown to reduce obesity in children and adolescents and there is evidence that it has preventive effects on chronic diseases such as diabetes. Mothers who breastfeed have shown to have reduced rates of breast and ovarian cancers and osteoporosis. There is also more to breastfeeding than breastmilk. Maternal-infant bonding, security and emotional adjustment are clearly part of the breastfeeding experience for the infant. As a physician I find it strange that some are concerned about breastfeeding in public but not concerned about the health effects that artificial baby milk and bottle feeding in public are having on the medical and emotional well-being of that baby and mother.

As you consider Michigan's health care budget, keep in mind that breastfeeding has been shown to reduce health care costs. One study found \$331 to \$475 additional cost to the managed care system for each never-breastfed infant in the first year of life. A Kaiser Permanente study found Infants who were breastfed for a minimum of 6 months experienced \$1,435.00 less health care claims than formula fed infants. Breastfeeding has also been associated with a healthier workforce. Since breastfed babies are sick less often, mothers are less likely to miss work.

Like many of the lactation professionals in this room, I have regularly witnessed the many barriers that prevent or disrupt breastfeeding. Most of them stem from a lack of knowledge regarding the value of breastfeeding as well as lack of support in the workplace and by the public. The problem that some have with breastfeeding in public is fostered by a couple generations of sexualizing the breast and not understanding the unique function of human milk production.

There are many other barriers to breastfeeding and opportunities to promote breastfeeding exist at all levels of education, in workplace promotion and in developing distinct maternal-child maternity leave that promotes prolonged breastfeeding, to name a few.

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Make no doubt, It it about the babies. Babies were born to breastfeed. The way babies breastfeed is to use the breast. They feed often and on demand. So we should encourage mothers to breastfeed, often and without stigma or restriction. Babies are not a special interest group. They are a citizen's like anyone else with special needs and they are ultimately dependent on our wise choices and our protection and support.

This legislation will go a long way to help store owners and managers of public establishments, allowing them to cite the law supporting a baby's right to human milk nourishment on demand.

Mothers of babies breastfeeding in public have been subjected to harassment and embarrassment. We have babies breastfeeding in bathrooms, not a place I suspect most of you or your children will eat your lunch or dinner today.

As you consider this legislation, I ask those of you who are not sure, to open your mind the next time you see a breastfeeding mother and infant and witness an act that is both nourishing and nurturing and fundamental to the health of that baby and mother and indeed to the public health of our state.

This legislation, while a small change on paper, is a giant step toward protecting and supporting breastfeeding and impacting the public health of Michigan. Several other states have taken significant steps to support breastfeeding and I hope Michigan will soon be recognized as a leader in this effort.

*"The wisest man ever born knew only this one thing at birth, but he knew it perfectly."
Gould HE. Science of Feeding Babies and Normal Care of the Growing Child, Rebman
Company; 1916:90.*

Thank you

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